

1) Live Oak - *Quercus virginiana* -

The South's most distinctive tree, especially when draped in Spanish moss. Trees have been reported with a branch spread of more than 150 feet and a trunk of 30 ft. or more. It is slow-growing but long lived. The acorns provide food for squirrels and birds. One species of fern on the tree is the Resurrection fern—*Polypodium polypodioides*. These leathery evergreen leaves are about 1 to 3 inches long. They curl when dry, making the plant appear dead, a little rain causes the leaves to reopen and to appear "resurrected"! It is found on larger branches of hardwood trees and is often accompanied with Spanish Moss.



2) Swamp Fern - *Blechnum serrulatum* -

The word "fern" is from the old Anglo-Saxon "fearn" meaning feather. Like feathers, the leaves of most ferns are delicate and divided. We can imagine delicate, divided, "feathery" fern leaves in moist, shady woods. While this image fits many ferns, others look very different. Some have leathery, undivided leaves. Others may be as tiny as a moss or as large as a tree. Most ferns are tropical, often growing upon the trunks and branches of trees in shady places. A few ferns are aquatic as in this case.



3) Beauty Berry - *Callicarpa americana* -

Evergreen shrubs are appealing in flower and especially in fruit. They are known for their colorful fruit rather than for flowers or foliage. The white/pink blossoms are hidden beneath 2- to 4-inch leaves in midsummer attracting butterflies and followed in the fall by tiny berries that cluster along the stems. The berries last two to three weeks and are an excellent food source for birds and for making jellies.



4) Wild Coffee - *Psychotria nervosa* -

There are two species of wild coffee with dark green, dull or glossy, oval, pointed leaves that can be up to 6 in. long with prominent veins. Trunk is multi-stemmed, shrub-like with brown bark. The blooms, small white flowers in clusters appear in spring & summer with fruit of oval red berries about 1/3 in. long.



5) Sabal/Cabbage Palm - *Sabal palmetto* -

Florida's state tree. The large fronds are deeply divided and folded in the middle, coloring a dull gray-green and 3-5 ft. across. The trunk is smooth and dark gray on older trees; younger trees are covered with cross-hatched old leaf bases. Blooms are small white, fragrant flowers that hang in clusters on 3 ft. stems, appearing in early summer. The fruit is round, and black, ripening in fall. The edible bud, called heart of palm, is considered a delicacy but collecting it kills the tree.



6) Carolina Ash - *Fraxinus caroliniana* -

The Carolina Ash (also known as Pop Ash") is a medium sized tree, attaining heights up to 40 feet, and diameters of the trunk up to 12 to 15 inches, found in river swamps. The leaves are relatively small, from 6 to 12 inches in length, with five to nine leaflets, each oval or oblong. They are coarsely toothed along the margin, dark green above. The flowers are generally very small and in compound clusters appearing very early, with or before the leaves. The male flowers are in a close mass, the female in a more open cluster.



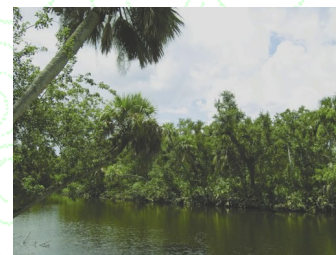
7) Golden Polypody - *Phlebodium aureum* -

Just above you, growing in the 'boots' of this cabbage palm is a unique epiphytic fern that is native to Florida. It can be found growing on live oaks, cabbage palms, and other moist well drained substrates. It is a rhizome epiphytic fern with many horizontal "feet" spanning the surface of which it grows to collect water from the moist canopy layer. The name, *aureum* refers to its golden brown scales that can be seen when view closely. Sweetwater hammock has a very dense epiphytic canopy system with several other species of vermiliads, ferns, orchids, and mosses. Be sure to look up into the canopy as you traverse through the rest of the trail.



8) North Fork of St. Lucie River

St. Lucie - St. Lucy of Syracuse, saint of the Roman Catholic church was born in Sicily and executed in 304 AD for being a Christian. Her name is associated with festivals of light and prayers for the blind. It's believed the name "[St. Lucie](#)" was first introduced to the area by the Spanish. In 1565 Fort Santa Lucia was built at the Jupiter Inlet. Construction for this fort began on December 13th, the feast day of the Roman Catholic Saint Lucia. Pedro Menendez de Aviles established a colony in 1567 called "Santa Lucia" somewhere between Vero Beach and Stuart. Old Spanish maps identify the area as Santa Lucia. The original Seminole name for the river was "Halpatiokee" meaning "alligator water".



9) Laurel Oak—*Quercus laurifolia*

These oaks are semi-evergreen trees which keep their leaves until early spring, just before the new season's leaves appear. Its leaves are elliptical and rather small, usually two to four inches long and up to one inch wide. Its dark brown acorns are also small, about one-half inch long. On mature trees, the bark is very dark, thick and deeply furrowed with broad, flat ridges. Its native habitat is the Coastal Plain of the Southeastern United States.



10) Water Hickory - *Carya aquatica* -

As the name indicates, this tree is found in lowlands, wet woods, and river swamps. The branches are rather upright, forming a narrow head, and may attain a height of about 110 feet and a diameter of over three feet. The bark is over a half-inch thick. Separating in loose plate-like, light brown or gray. The leaves are compound, of seven to 17 slender scythe shaped leaflets, coarsely toothed on the margin. The fruit is usually clustered and decidedly angled. The nut is four-angled, flattened, containing a very bitter seed.



11) Carolina Willow - *Salix Carolina* -

Willows are found throughout the U.S. in swamps, edges of streams or beside lakes and can be propagated easily with cuttings. Listening to the willow and watching its' gentle movements encourages relaxation.




12) Caesar's Weed - *Urena lobata*

A common invasive weed, that lives in disturbed soils. It grows to 9 ft tall. The leaves are wide ovates about 5--10 cm long and flowers all year. When the fruit dries it splits into five parts. The seeds are distributed by "hitch-hiking", easily attaching itself to human clothing and animal fur.



13) **Saltbush** - *Baccharis halimifolia* -
Leaves are 2-3 in. long and are toothed near the ends. Trunk is multi-stemmed brown in color. Blooms in late summer and fall. Female plants produce the fluffy seed clusters that resemble the end of a paint brush.

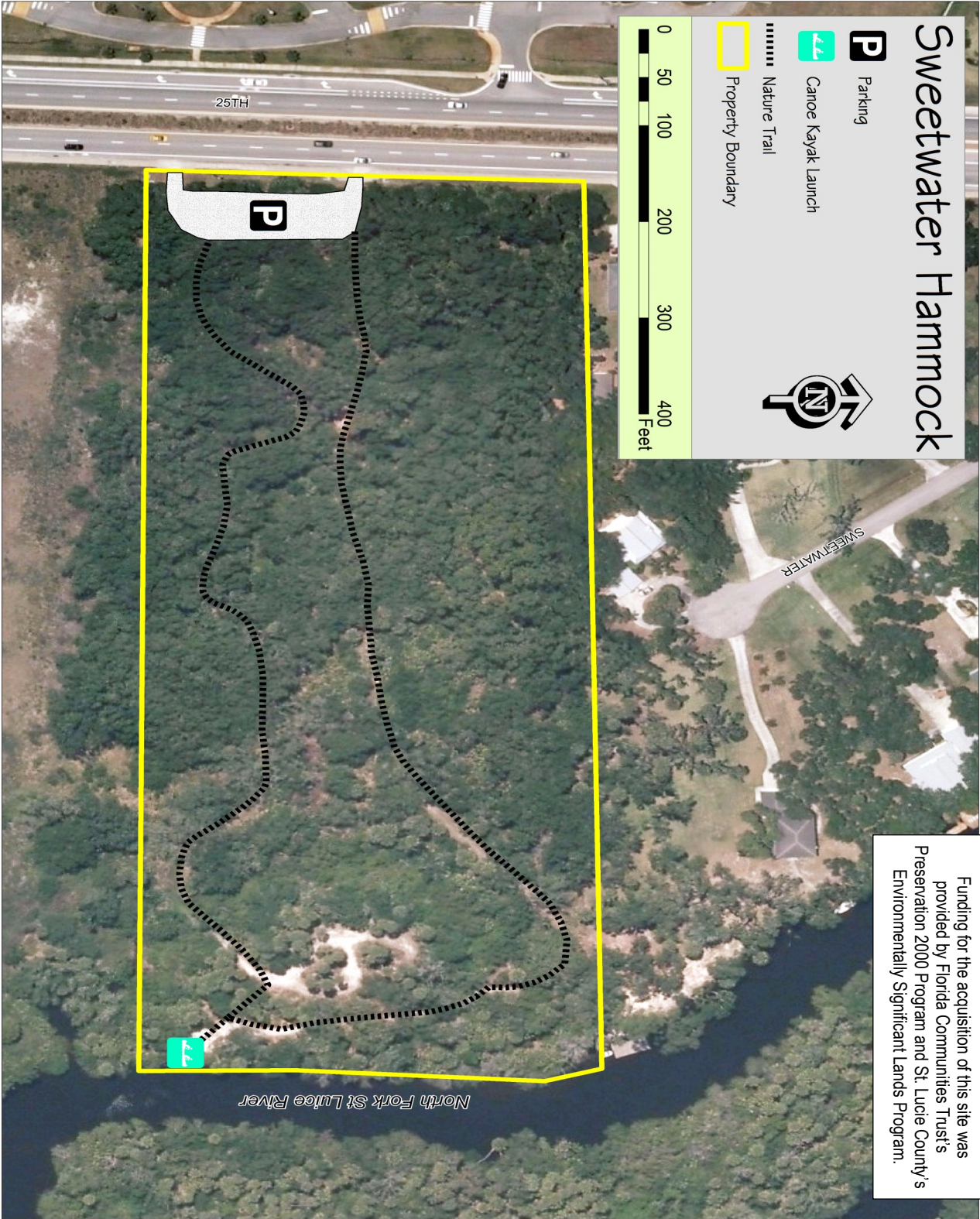


Sweetwater Hammock contains 8 acres of hydric hammock and flood plain swamp. This small natural area is sandwiched between a busy highway and residential community. The area provides a small glimpse of the North Fork with an interpretive one-half mile trail.

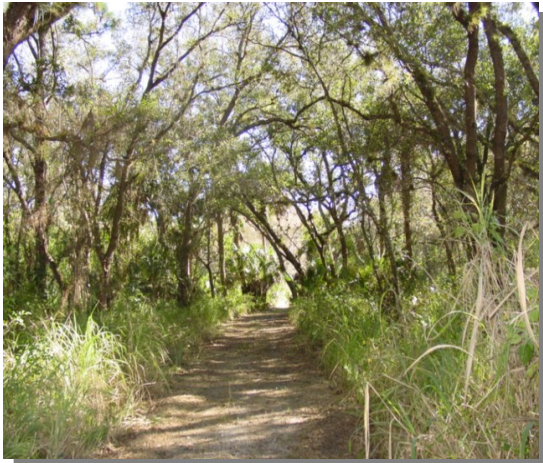
The trail head and parking area is located on the east side of 25th Street, 1.2 miles North of Midway Road, Fort Pierce.

- Guidelines and Safety Information:**
- Be cautious of uneven trail surfaces.
 - Please remain on the trails.
 - Carry adequate drinking water.
 - In case of lightning, seek a low area away from trees, fence lines and tall objects.
 - In case of emergency, call 911.
 - While hiking the trail you may encounter animals indigenous to this area. Please observe from a safe distance.
 - Leave all plant life intact.
 - Please leave site cleaner that you found it. "Pack it in, pack it out".
 - Use at own risk.

To learn more about St. Lucie County’s natural heritage, there are more than 20 self-guiding interpretive trails located within the Natural Areas/Preserves. Each trail describes the most common plants, as well as significant geographical and historical features of the site.



Sweetwater Hammock Preserve



Interpretive Trail



**St. Lucie County
Environmental Resources
Department**
2300 Virginia Avenue
Ft. Pierce, FL 34982

772-462-2526



http://www.stlucieco.gov/erd/environmental_lands.htm
Site Open: Sunrise to Sunset (12/11)